



U.S. Department of Justice

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For Immediate Release:

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EVENT: Indictment

Defendant: Verniamin Gonikman et al

**Ukrainian Man and Chicago Man Indicted for Crimes Relating to
Involuntary Servitude of Eastern European Women at Detroit Area Strip Clubs**

Veniamin Gonikman, age 51, of Kiev, Ukraine, and Duay Jado, age 27, a Greek citizen residing in Skokie, Illinois area, were indicted today by a federal grand jury in Detroit for conspiring to force Eastern European women to work as exotic dancers in Detroit area strip clubs, United States Attorney Stephen J. Murphy and Assistant Attorney General Wan J. Kim announced.

“We intend to pursue the prosecution of this human trafficking operation wherever the evidence leads,” said U.S. Attorney Murphy. “Today’s indictment is an indicator of our resolve on this matter.”

Gonikman, who is alleged to be one of the partners in “Beauty Search, Inc.,” was charged in twenty counts of the indictment with involuntary servitude, immigration and money laundering conspiracies, as well as counts of forced labor, human trafficking, and document servitude. The government is also seeking to forfeit over \$1 million for Gonikman’s role in the underlying crimes.

In addition to the involuntary servitude conspiracy, the grand jury indicted Jado, a Greek citizen residing in the Chicago, Illinois, area, on counts of extortionate collection of extension of credit and use of fire in the commission of a felony. According to the indictment and other court papers, in the Spring of 2004, following the escape of one of the dancers, Jado set the car of the dancer's sister on fire in retaliation for the dancer's escape and for failing to repay an outstanding debt allegedly owed to the Beauty Search, Inc. partners.

Today's indictments follow on the heels of a guilty plea yesterday by one of the ring-leaders of the trafficking scheme, Aleksandr Maksimenko, of Livonia, Michigan, to conspiring to violate the civil rights of the dancers through involuntary servitude, as well as immigration and money laundering conspiracies. Another partner of Beauty Search, Inc., Michail Aronov, a Lithuanian citizen from the Chicago area, pled guilty to similar charges on September 8, 2005. In addition to Maksimenko and Aronov, five other persons have pled guilty to offenses associated with the trafficking scheme, including Evgeniy Prokopenko and Alexander Bondarenko, two Ukrainian citizens residing in Brooklyn, NY, who pled guilty to visa fraud on September 9, 2005, admitting that they entered into sham marriages in 2004 with two of the dancers in order to permit the dancers to gain entry into the United States. On November 1, 2005, Anna Gonikman-Starchenko, a Ukrainian citizen living in the Detroit metro area, pled guilty to obstruction-related charges stemming from actions taken following the arrests of Maksimenko and Aronov. On November 3, 2005, Niki Papoutsaki, a Greek citizen living in the Detroit metro area, pled guilty to misprision of a felony in connection with obstruction-related activity. Finally, on February 14, 2006, Valentina Maksimenko, a naturalized U.S. citizen residing in the Chicago area, pled guilty to a conspiracy to obstruct justice during the course of the federal investigation.

An indictment is only a charge and is not evidence of guilt. A defendant is entitled to a fair trial in which it will be the government's burden to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

The case is being investigated by the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Investigation, and the State Department Diplomatic Security Service. Assistant United States Attorney Mark Chutkow and Lou de Baca, Senior Litigation Counsel at the Department of Justice, Civil Rights

Division, Criminal Section, are prosecuting the case. Peter Ziedas, Assistant United States Attorney is handling the asset forfeiture part of the case.